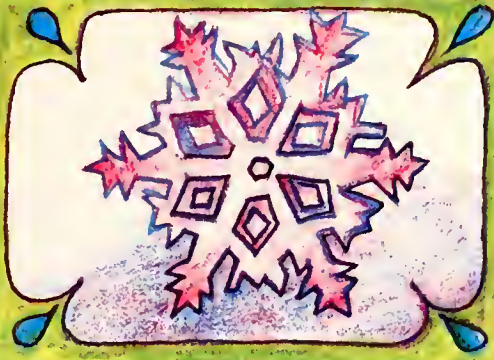


Delta Scene



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Delta Scene

Winter 1977 Volume 4, No. 4

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Our Cover: Jill Stowe gives us a colorful picture of the winter months.

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FORUM

by Curt Lamar

As I sat with pen in hand, attempting to develop a "Forum" which would be appropriate for this issue, the words of a song (or a poem, or both) kept running through my mind. In fact, I couldn't concentrate on my endeavor because I was unable to remember all the words to the song and was at a loss as to its author.

Finally, I stopped my "Forum" effort, which had progressed but little, to discover the remaining words and the author of this beautiful, haunting melody. Then it dawned on me! Inspiration had struck again. The song was one of the most loved of this holiday season. Indeed, it expresses in large part what I was feebly attempting to say on my own.

Thus, with grateful acknowledgement, I turn the "Forum" over to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose words express my feelings and my wishes (and those of the staff of DELTA SCENE) to you this lovely season:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And in Despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

Happy Holidays!



MAILBOX

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed is my check for a one year subscription to DELTA SCENE. I enjoyed the copy a friend let me borrow.

Do you have back copies and how much are they? I especially want Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 1977.

Yours sincerely,
Catherine W. Bryan

Back issues of DELTA SCENE are available at the rate of \$1.00 per issue. We currently have back issues of all magazines since Delta State University assumed ownership of DELTA SCENE in the Spring of 1976. Although we have copies of all issues for sale, we have a limited supply of the Summer 1976, Fall 1976 and Winter 1976 issues.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is my check for a year's subscription to DELTA SCENE. I am a former Deltan having been born in Greenwood, Mississippi. Though I have been living in Jackson since 1945, I'll remain a Deltan.

Congratulations on a beautiful job well done on the DELTA SCENE. Keep up the fine work!

Sincerely yours,
Vera Stevens
Media Coordinator
Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board

Many deltans have friends who have moved from the Delta area to other parts of the state and country. Why not consider a subscription of DELTA SCENE as a Christmas Gift to these friends? For \$3.50 these friends can enjoy a small part of the Delta four times a year.



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RITA'S RIDE

by Martha McLaughlin



illustrated by Ricky Perkins

Rita dashed down the street on her Honda in an effort to get to the hospital by eight A.M. Nothing unusual was going to happen at eight. Rita was a medical technologist who worked in a large hospital laboratory and was expected to be on duty by that time. Dressed in cut-off blue jeans and tennis shoes with her hair under a cap, she looked very much like a boy.

Parking a car at the hospital had become a real problem. However, Rita had solved it by riding her Honda to work. She had found a place under the nursing dorm to park her "wheels." After parking she changed into her white uniform and shoes in the nursing dorm. This was quite convenient

since the dorm was connected to the hospital by a covered walk-way, making it easy to enter the hospital.

This morning as Rita buzzed along, a siren began to whine. She thought, "My, they are already bringing in wreck victims. Guess it's going to be a busy day." It did not occur to Rita that it wasn't an ambulance she heard. Instead it was a policeman chasing her. (She still insists 'till this day that she did not know he was trying to stop her for speeding.) She whizzed through the gate, and the gate-keeper saw the policeman behind her on his motorcycle. Permission has to be given to enter the gate, so the gate-keeper slammed the gate shut immediately after Rita entered. The policeman was forced to come to a screeching halt, with the back wheel of his motorcycle skidding almost out from under him.

"Open that gate!" he demanded.

"Might I ask why, Officer?"

"To find that Honda you just let in," he continued.

"Oh, is something wrong?" the gate-keeper drawled.

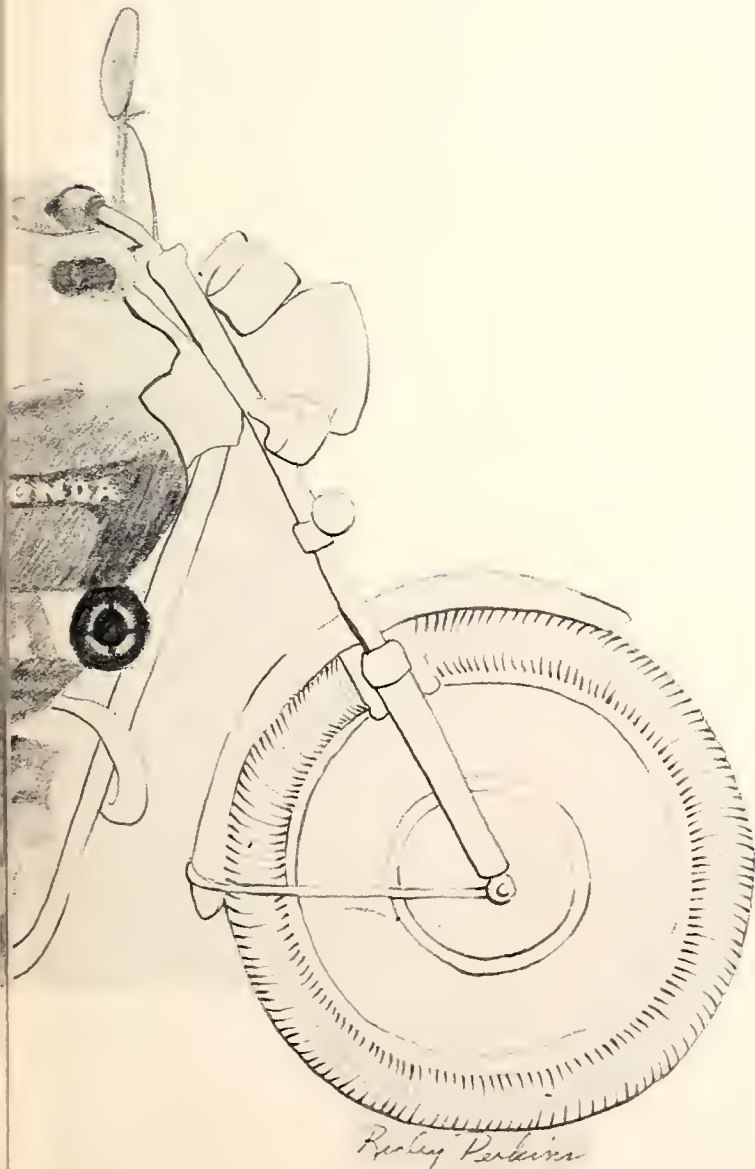
"Just hurry up and open this gate," the officer blurted.

"Yes, Sir!"

The gate flung open and the policeman sped through. He rode up rows and down rows of the parking lot carefully searching for Rita and her Honda. Many doctors rode Hondas to work and parked them near the back door of the hospital. The policeman did not neglect checking each one of the license plates on them. His effort was futile. He could not find the Honda or Rita.

Rita had parked her Honda under the dorm as usual and gone up to put on her white uniform and shoes. She then left the dorm neatly dressed for work and went to the hospital without even knowing the big search was on in the parking lot.

The policeman continued to search for the person wearing cut-offs and tennis shoes. Finally he gave up. When he got back to the gate he said to the gate-keeper, "You tell that boy I'll be looking for him in the morning."



Pace,

My Mississippi Delta Home: a Loss and a Gain

by Marie Amacker Fisk

It's July again and after 50 years I'm back in the Mississippi Delta. This flat Delta land has seen much change. But some of the old life continues, and seems better for having endured. My car moves ahead until suddenly, as if out of nowhere, the town of Pace appears. As I stop my car on the right side of the street at the older home of a cousin, I stare. Is this the Pace of my childhood? I get out of the car and begin to walk,

and to remember. Ah, yes. To remember.

This is the spot of the railroad tracks; however, there are no tracks now. Then I look down and see a log. Once again in my mind's eye I am way up on top a pile of logs by where the tracks used to be. I was five years old then. I felt the deep ridges in the bark of the fresh cut logs that pressed into my hands and legs. Up here, I saw the train better. I heard the familiar long, low whistle as the train approached. Black smoke gushed out of the smokestack. I smelled the thick smoke. My eyes and cheeks smarted from a few cinders that gusts from the smoke brought.

The cars came by, some loaded with logs held by chains, others jangled loosely with animals or railroad ties. The engineer waved. I waved back. The train seldom stopped since we had no station. It continued on its way west toward the Mississippi River. And now, only one log remains.

I am wondering, "what is left of the town?" I hurry ahead to the end of the street. I look up. The school is gone! Only a vacant lot exists where it stood. A few wildflowers grow here and there in the midst of grass and a few straggling weeds. I looked up again and saw now an imposing red, brick school building that used to be. On the second floor, I looked for the third window from the left. That was Daddy's office as

principal of the school. All the activity of the town was centered here. It was a beehive, after school opened. Feet clambered up the stairs and down the halls, on the playground swings, and on the ballfield. During the summer, the teachers were gone. But Daddy's office was still open, on occasions. Then, I followed him up the stairs and through the dark halls.

Pace was a bustling town, if you consider a handful of stores, a church, a school, and a few homes a town. But life had a quality in everyday living that stretched into eternity.

Life in the Delta was special. It was not like the land of my paternal grandparents in south Mississippi. Land there was sandy, and poor. Ours was different. It was rich, a good land. I learned that it was considered to be some of the richest in the world for growing crops. The corn, cotton, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes Daddy grew on his small farm yielded a bounty crop for us.

Polished wood dining tables were laid with heavy silver for social functions. There was a rightness in the social graces, and in the lives of the people. Even though overalls were worn during the week, there was always the excellent Sunday dress. White dress and shoes, with ribbons and curls, were for "occasions." The boys came in their best suits to the parties.

Now I see the vacant lot and the



Illustration by Jill Stowe from a photograph furnished by the author.

The author, five years old, is on the log.

"Daddy" in the story, third from right, was the late Dr. James Cleveland Amacker, Principal of Pace Consolidated School for 9 years. With them are six ladies on the Pace School faculty and a school board member.

weeds.

The walk leads next door to what used to be the Teacher's Home. Instead of a white, two-story frame house, I see a deserted house with rotting timbers. The former columned porch across the front is nothing now but broken boards, cobwebbs, and dust. I stare at the rotting wood and look toward the upstairs. There, in a closet, I had carved my initials the day we left, staking my claim on this home. I wonder if the initials are still there.

I remembered the teachers who lived in the upstairs rooms. I visited them often. As they held me on their laps, I stroked their fur muffs. The silk of their stockings felt smooth on my fingertips. Delightful smelling perfumes and powders on their vanity tables allured me. When they left in summer, I explored what lingered in the dressers. Only a few hairpins were found.

Our family lived downstairs.

Mother boarded the teachers and the helpers around the farm. I head the voice of Roberta, our black cook, "Lawdy, Mis' Stella, what we gonna' do with Marie? She drags in more dirt than we can get offa' her." My hands had swept up playground dirt with the marbles when I heard her call. Mother smiled, and shrugged with the usual complaint about her tomboy. Daddy said, as usual, "My boy is a girl." So, the tomboy was loved.

Roberta was passed along to our family from the "place" of Mother's home in Utica. Roberta heaped our board with bountiful fare steaming from the wood-burning stove in the kitchen. Hot biscuits and home cooking made meals a real occasion. Mother added her salads and fine cakes.

Downstairs, in the kitchen, I remembered Knocker, a strong black boy of eight or nine. He came from Utica, too. He chopped wood, carried it in, and

always kept the woodbox filled. The overalls and black rubber knee-length boots were a familiar sight around the pigs and little barn down near the Bogue. Usually, he sat behind the kitchen stove at suppertime. I remembered Daddy saying one summer, "Knocker, your feet are going to burn up in those boots." Knocker just stretched his toes under the stove, and replied, "I likes 'em." And I saw them the day after, and every day, a boy's choice for his work garb. The boots helped him get around after the heavy rains when the Mississippi mud was deep and sticky. Then feet stuck, as if in deep glue.

Knocker was one I had always counted on for help, whether in setting up a playhouse, or just being a confidant and a friend. He was about my age, and his importance to me was second to none. Sarah, my sister, was only two and there was no one for me to play with except Roberta's

children. There were several of them in Roberta's small house located behind the Teacher's Home. I liked to play there. The walls expanded as we, in unison, jumped on the sacks of cottonseed stashed in the corner. With each jump, there was a crunch heard along with our squeals of laughter. I look at the rotting wood again.

Behind the house a clump of trees can be seen. There, I remember, was the stand of pecan trees. I walk quickly and can see that only a few remain. One tall tree stands above the rest. I recall Knocker yelling one day, "Look out for your head, down there!" That was the day we shook the pecan trees so hard.

Aunt Stella was coming from Texas for a visit. I remembered Knocker and I ran to the pecan trees that fall day to gather pecans. Only the freshest pecans would do for the big occasion, as Roberta was going to make her pecan pies. The tall, papershell pecan tree and its great branches bore a crop ready for harvest, and Knocker scaled the top branch. He began to stomp his foot, and the pecans rained down. The quick thumps on the ground told us we had sackfuls to be gathered, so we filled large gunnysacks, and dragged them to the kitchen door. I see the tall tree, the only one left now.

A few feet away is a path that leads to the Bogue. My eyes follow it, and I hurry. It isn't far. Soon I

reach some trees; this must be the bank. A strange sight greets my eyes. This, the Bogue? A green, slimy mass, no water, or what's here, covered with green. Stagnant, polluted. The beautiful fresh water stream is no more. Down to the right, across the stream, there was a sandbar, jutting out into what was clear water. I see a sandy spot. I can picture the July scenes here.

Sundays in July were spent in Sunday school and church at the little Baptist church. Afterward, I could hardly wait to get away from the dinner table. The Sunday baptizing of the black folk was taking place at the Bogue. Down I raced, Roberta's children bounding behind. The willow tree on the bank made a fit chapel for us, as we got a shady seat and dug our heels into the bank. The heat from above was broken by several taller trees above the willow. The big event was about to take place.

On the other side of the Bogue in the long white robes were those saved in the morning service. They were singing. Out onto the sandbar and into the water the preacher led, singly, the one to be immersed. "Lordy, Halleluia!" a voice shouted. The shouting was accompanied by the jumping up and down of the one to be baptized. Much of my childish mind was imbued with the singing of the spirituals. Nowhere in all of heaven, or the hereafter, could such singing be matched. "Comin'

for to Carry Me Home!" swelled the tide of one's spirit into heavenly places with the rising of the voices.

Down to the water's edge and into the water came the next baptismal candidate. The candidate jumped so hard the preacher could hardly hold him. The crescendos swelled, and we listened, and sang, too, and swayed with the music. And now, silence; the sandbar is deserted.

Back up the Bogue, I spot a cypress tree. This must be where we used to tie up our boat. I touch the cypress tree, and feel the knotty trunk.

Summer was the best time of all as life was slow and lazy. Fishing on the Bogue was a favorite pastime. Daddy and I fished practically every day it didn't rain. Knocker was a frequent third member in our boat. Charley Lou, the Chinese grocer, was a familiar sight in his boat as he sought white perch, black bass, and other fish that abounded. Others took time out from farming and fished, in spite of the intense heat. "That's a fine one!" called Daddy as Charley Lou held up a four-pound bass. It was usually after a short nap in the afternoon, when the shadows of the trees lengthened, that we ventured out.

The late afternoon was my best time of day, for it was then that the fish were biting, and the waters were tranquil. The locusts heralded the late afternoon with

serenades that continued until the early darkness set in. A mockingbird answered as we baited our hooks with minnows seined from creeks, or with a shiny silver Skip-Jack. These were taken from a school with the iron-handled dipnet. The school ripped on top of the water briefly, then sank.

One day, Daddy had just come back from the hospital in Greenville. Surgeons there had relieved him of a troublesome gallbladder. Life had slowed for me, since Daddy couldn't fish due to a sore, strapped side. "Please, can't we go out for awhile?" I coaxed. "Knocker can paddle the boat." Daddy finally agreed and took an upright chair to sit in the back of the boat. I sat in a middle seat, and Knocker was ready to launch the boat into the water. Charley Lou stopped by in his boat, "Any minnows I can borrow from you?" "Not a one, we're out," Daddy answered.

Knocker untied the boat from the cypress tree, and pushed us forward. Excitedly, he pursued a school of Skip-Jacks that rippled ahead as we moved toward the middle of the stream. Standing up in front, he made a great dip. In doing so, he fell headlong out the boat. He sank suddenly, dipnet in hand. I gazed down. There were only bubbles, and more bubbles, coming up from the place where he sank. Seconds seemed like



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Profile:

James Hand, Jr., A Delta Pioneer

by Charles Pearce

Unlike most people who use calendars, Deltans mark the changing of the seasons by the farmer's chores in the fields. Powerful tractors which prepare the rich soil for another crop signal the arrival of spring. Mechanical pickers crawl through the cotton rows and snatch precious fibers each fall. The machine in its own season becomes a dominant part of the Delta's landscape, and the man who is largely responsible for making these machines a permanent fixture of this land is an unassuming resident of Rolling Fork, James Hand, Jr.

Reared in a south Mississippi sawmill family, Hand arrived in

Sharkey County in the early 1920's and purchased a sizeable acreage of the Delta's finest hardwood. Not long after the sawmill and commissary were constructed, however, Hand's budding enterprise was destroyed by the devastating impact of the post-war agricultural depression. Although terribly disappointed by the failure of his first business venture, Hand planned to change his means of livelihood to merchandising and began preparations to open a country hardware store in Rolling Fork. In order to stock his Home Hardware Company properly, Hand conducted "a rather crude survey" to assess the needs of his farming customers.

His inquiry into the Sharkey-Issaquena area revealed the prevalence of archaic farming methods which had changed little since the first white farmers had settled in the South. The most widely used farm implements were the mule-driven turning plows, one-row shaker-type cotton planters, and double-shovel cultivators. Since the first tractors were bulky and could not cultivate a field without damaging the young plants, power machinery was ill-suited to the vicinity and, therefore, was practically nonexistent.

Additionally, Hand realized that



the sharecropping method, which had been the predominant labor arrangement for the Delta since the Civil War, was totally unreliable in the area because of factors which were beyond the powers of the local landowners. The frequent backwater intrusions brought farming to a virtual halt during the early 1920's, and the little cotton that was planted those years was always subject to the voracious appetite of the boll weevil. As a result, labor agents from northern industries and plantation owners from the drier Upper Delta descended upon Sharkey and Issaquena Counties and promised the hapless tenants more lucrative jobs elsewhere. Thousands of the water-stranded black workers gladly packed their few possessions and abandoned their unproductive farm plots. Because of nature's wrath and the enticing lure of outside interests, Hand viewed a vast fertile plain

producing only weeds and sprouts.

Fully convinced that the proper power machinery could lessen the acute labor shortage, lower production costs, and reclaim neglected land, Hand wrote a letter to the International Harvester Company at Memphis, reported the results of his inspection, and asked about the recent developments in mechanical farm machinery. The Company quickly responded by dispatching Jere Nash and Edgar Berry to Sharkey County with a dealership contract for Home Hardware Company. Harvester's representatives also brought encouraging news about the company's introduction of the first general-purpose tractor — the Farmall. Unlike previous tractors, which lacked maneuverability in row-crops and were limited only to breaking and disking the land, the Farmall, with its easily distinguishable steel lugs protruding from the rear wheels, was designed to operate in rows and was equipped with two-row attachments which could do the additional chores of preparing a seedbed, planting, and cultivating. To Hand the possibilities seemed far-reaching; he could now provide the labor-starved farmer with mechanical implements which could perform all basic farming operations traditionally accomplished by mule-drive equipment. The stage was set for the challenge by the steel mule to the time-honored reputation of the four-legged mule.

When Home Hardware received its first shipment of Farmalls, the tractors were paraded through the streets of Rolling Fork and Anguilla and were decorated with banners announcing the time and place of a public trial for the new contender. In order to provide the many skeptics with proof of the Farmall's value, the optimistic sales representatives of Harvester selected a hard-packed alfalfa field, which had undergone the constant trampling of weighty Holstein cows, for the test site.

A sizable crowd of curious farmers gathered at the locale, belonging to T.W. Fields, for the awaited experiment. As the first furrow was attempted, the plow did not cut into the firm soil at a level depth. Some impatient onlookers scoffed while numerous adjustments were made on the plowing equipment. By nightfall the unbelieving witnesses had long since departed while the slightly humiliated promoters were desperately trying to achieve respectable results. Yet, the machine continued to operate improperly; the mule's dominance seemed assured. The reputation of the tractor and Home Hardware suffered a disappointing — although temporary — setback.

Unwilling to accept the outcome, Hand and his colleagues held another bout with the stubborn Delta soil on an adjoining field the next day. In the rematch, the Farmall performed splendidly and proved its ability in rapidly converting weed-choked acres into suitable farm land. The promoters realized that the failure of the previous day was caused by the rolling land of the first test plot instead of the firmness of the soil. After a series of equally successful demonstrations, T.W. Fields, the owner of the meadow in which the tractor initially failed, purchased a Farmall and furrow plow. The tractor thus redeemed itself in full view of former skeptics.

With a new confidence Hand

continued on page 26

Sardis Dam

Oxford, Mississippi

Lake water laps in lazy currents,
in soft heaves of liquid songs, erratic
charges against reddish clay-hewn banks.
Two paddle ends tenderly entwine
with the green, warm water,
as they row their raft in the late
evening away from shore.
Moonlight throws murmured ripples
over the water: moon not admitting
the existence of anyone, animal or planet.
In the night sky, the moon is
wily and serene.
A brisk wind prods the almost
passionless skin of things into
a sweet exhilaration, after
the oppressive summer's heat.
In the backwoods of the sky, the moon
is alone except for a few stars,
but there are no roads or footpaths
between them.
In the small raft, faces lean
against each other.
Treetops of cypress, gum and hickory
sprout from the water, as they
maneuver their route
in and out of pilings, beyond
buoys and rotting flora — a boggy
knoll of an island to their left.
Heedless, free and eternal,
the lovers steer their taciturn raft
beneath a retiring moon, amid
the fairy wakes their paddles trace
over the constant water.

Susan Efird



ART exhibits

December

Christmas Tree Eggs Exhibit by Hazen Higgins. Courtesy of Mrs. D.M. Ferriss. Robinson Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

December 4-20

Christmas Bazaar. Sale of faculty and student work. Opening 2-5 p.m., December 4. Wright Art Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

December 10

Atlanta Excursion "Armard Hammer Exhibition" High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia.*

December 11

Young Artist's Open House, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. 3:00 p.m. Co-sponsored by Jackson Symphony Orchestra and the South Jackson Civic League.

December 31

Start Your Party with Greenville Art Gallery. New Year's Eve Exhibit and Reception. Works by Mamie Jo and Dale Rayburn of Atlanta, Georgia. Greenville Art Gallery, Mainstream Mall, Greenville, MS.

January

Kindergarten Art Show, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

January

Exhibit of Choctaw Indian Children's Artwork. Robinson Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

January 15-31

Exhibition of Prints by Johnny Ward and Sculpture by Laverne Krause. Opening 3-5 p.m. January 15. Wright Art Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

February

Piney Woods School Traveling Art Exhibit, Robinson Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

February 5-28

Delta State University Student and High School Seniors Competition. Opening 3-5 p.m. February 8. Wright Art Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

February 13-March 4

"Stichery 77", Deposit Guaranty Plaza, Jackson, MS. Co-sponsored by the Stichery Guild, Mississippi Art Association and Mississippi Museum of Art.

February 24 & 25

Thombai Benefit Auction. Mississippi Museum of Art, Mississippi Art Association, Jackson, MS.*



CONCERTS

December 1

Delta State University Student Honor Recital. (Students are selected for the excellence of their work during the semester.) 8:00 p.m. Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. No admission fee.

December 4

Band Concert. 3:00 p.m. Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. No admission fee.

December 6

Delta State University Chorale Concert. 8:00 p.m. Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. No admission fee.

December 11

Handel's Messiah. 3:00 p.m. First Methodist Church. Clarksdale, MS.

January 24

Band Concert. 8:00 p.m. Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. No admission fee.

January 27

West Side Story by the Young Americans. Sponsored by Delta Music Association. 8:00 p.m. Greenville High School Auditorium, Greenville, MS.

January 30

Greenville Symphony Orchestra in concert with Peter Spurbek, first cellist of Memphis Symphony, featuring Dvorak's Concerto in B Minor. Conducted by Dr. Sidney McKay. 8:00 p.m. Greenville High School Auditorium, Greenville, MS.

January 31

Barbara Harback in Organ Recital. 8:00 p.m. Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. A small admission fee will be charged.

February 6

Les Brown and His Band of Renown sponsored by Clarksdale Community Concert. 8:00 p.m. City Auditorium, Clarksdale, MS.

February 7

Rausom Wilson Woodwind Quintet sponsored by Delta Music Association. 8:00 p.m. Greenville High School Auditorium, Greenville, MS.

February 18

Final Concert of Honor Band/Honor Clinic (high school students chosen from around the state by audition). 6:30 p.m. Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. No admission fee.



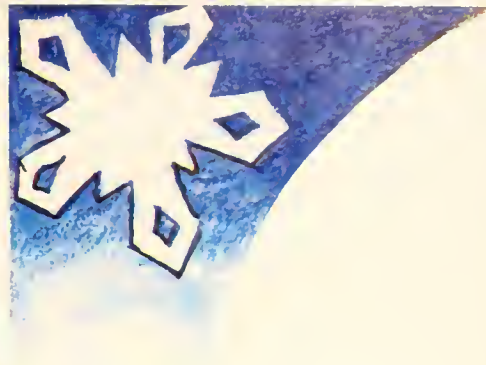
FILMS

January 12 & 13

New South Film Center in Jackson opens with Classic Film series: selected clips from Lumiere and Melies; E.S. Proter's **The Great Train Robbery**. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., January 12th; 1:30 p.m. January 13th. Advance Subscription.*

January 19 & 20

Classic Film Series: **Intolerance** by D.W. Griffith. New South Film Center, Jackson, MS. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., January 19th; 1:30 p.m. January 20th. Advance Subscription.*



January 26 & 27

Classic Film Series: **The General**, Buster Keaton. New South Film Center, Jackson, MS. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m. January 26th; 1:30 p.m. January 27th. Advance Subscription.*

February 2 & 3

Classic Film Series: **Sunrise and The Last Laugh**, F.W. Murnau. New South Film Center, Jackson, MS. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., February 2nd; 1:30 p.m., February 3rd. Advance Subscription.*

February 9 & 10

Classic Film Series: **Mother**, V.I. Pudovkin. New South Film Center, Jackson, MS. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., February 9th; 1:30 p.m., February 10th. Advance Subscription.*

February 23 & 24

Classic Film Series: **Modern Times**, Charlie Chaplin. New South Film Center, Jackson, MS. 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., February 23rd; 1:30 p.m., February 24th. Advance Subscription.*



lectures & symposiums

December 1

Lunch with Books, 12:00 noon. Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, MS.

December 7

Lunching with Books, "The Wonderful World of Eggs," by Hazen Higgins, well known egg decorator. 12-1:00 p.m. Robinson Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

December 13 & 14

Series I Lecture: Frances Nauman, "The Nativity: Before and After the Renaissance". 8:00 p.m., December 13th; 1:30 p.m., December 14th. Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. Advance Subscription.*

December 15

Lunch with Books, 12:00 noon. Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, MS.

January 10 & 11

Series I Lecture: Douglas Berman, "Art and the Art of Collecting". 8:00 p.m., January 10th; 1:30 p.m. January 11th. Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. Advance Subscription.*

January 14

Second Annual Wind and Percussion Symposium. Clinicians: Tommy Newsome and Ed Shaughnessey of the NBC Tonight Show. The Union, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. For more information write: Department of Music, P.O. Box 3256, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS 38733.

January 24 & 25

Series I Lecture: Allen Wardwell, "Primer for Primitive Art". 8:00 p.m., January 24th; 1:30 p.m., January 25th. Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. Advance Subscription.*

February 8

Lunching with Books, "Antique Valentines" by Mrs. Donald Beadell, collector of greeting cards. 12-1:00 p.m. Robinson Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

February 14 & 15

Series I Lecture: M.J. Czarniecki, III, "Through the Past, Darkly: Photography's First Hundred Years", 8:00 p.m., February 14th; 1:30 p.m., February 15th. Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS. Advance Subscription.*



THEATRE

December 7 & 8

Comedy Tonight, 8:00 p.m., Delta Playhouse, Job Hall, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS. Admission: Adults-\$2.00, Children-\$1.00.

Special Events

December 1-24

Santa Comes to Greenville Mall. Exhibit of Christmas Trees from around the world. Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

December 2

Delta Band Festival and Winter Carnival. 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Downtown Greenwood, MS.

December 3 & 4, 10 & 11, 17 & 18

"A Special 1850 Christmas at Florewood" 9:30-5:00, December 3rd, 10th and 17th; 1:00-5:00 p.m., December 4th, 11th and 18th. Florewood River Plantation, Greenwood, MS.

December 6-31

Santa arrives by barge with his sleigh and reindeers at 6:00 p.m. on December 6th. Lights on the 14-15 floats will be lighted each night until 10:00 p.m. Deer Creek, Leland, MS.

December 6

Clarksdale Holiday Festival and Parade. 7:00 p.m., Downtown Clarksdale, MS.

February 23-24

Boat Show, Swimsuit Contest and Trout Stream, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

*Contact Mississippi Art Association/Mississippi Museum of Art for details. (601) 354-3538

During the spring and summer months North American skies are continuously patrolled by insectivorous bird friends. Chuck-will's widows, Whip-poor-wills, Poor-wills, and small owls are in our nighttime skies. During the days and evenings swallows, martins, swifts, and nighthawks take over. These diurnal and crepuscular birds are among my favorite aviators. However, the chittery-Chatter Chimney Swifts of the eastern half of the United States and Canada always give me a special thrill.

Some authors describe these delightful birds as flying cigars with wings, which is as close to an avian oath as can be imagined. These trim birds scythe through the air in a light and varied flight that might be interpreted as simply having fun. They are gregarious and noisy, and are often utterly oblivious to human intrusion. They are a sight to behold when, following in pairs, or often in threes, they individually

The Demise of a Swift Family

by Ronald M. Knaus

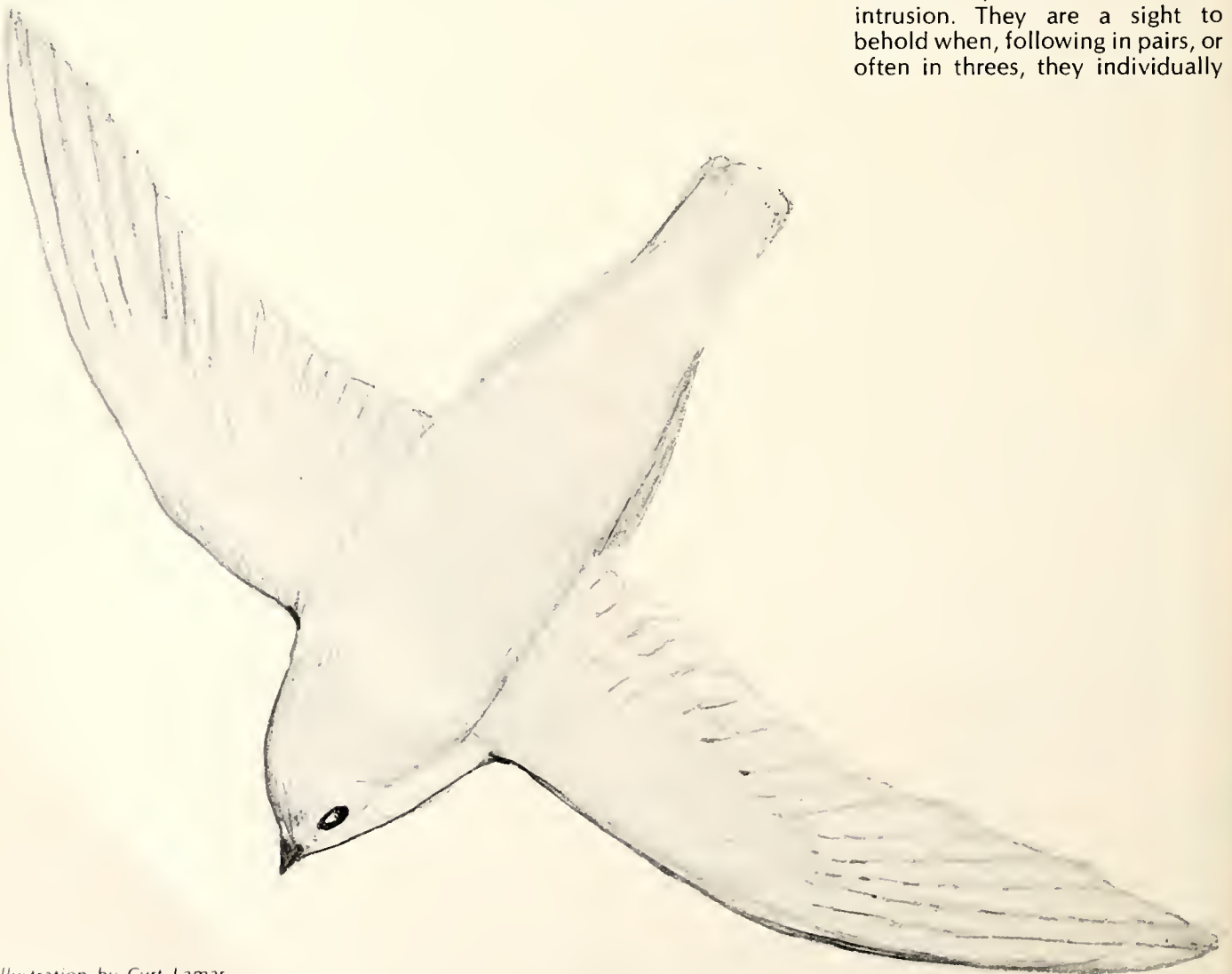


illustration by Curt Lamar

display a V configuration with their wings. From a favorable vantage point it is impressive to see a magnificently performed flight by a swift abruptly end over a chimney, when this graceful flyer drops like a rock out of sight. And when one emerges from the chimney to forage, it catches even the most watchful observer off guard, for the bird is in the air so rapidly the witness must convince himself that, indeed, it did come from the chimney and is not just a passer-by.

Each spring these tiny migrants travel thousands of miles north from the headwaters of the Amazon River in South America. Their appearance in the spring coincides nicely with a multitude of insect hatches along their migration routes and especially in the bird's breeding grounds. At the height of the swift's brooding time, each adult collects for itself and its voracious nestlings more than its own weight in insects each day. Imagine, each nest accounts for nearly three ounces of insects daily. These include the types of insects that attempt to consume you, your livestock, and your gardens, both edible and ornamental. Many of these insects are flying reproductive stages of termites, aphids, and ants.

Evening time spent on patios or in fields enjoying a view or a streaming sunset is often cut short by bothersome insects which swifts and their allies continually depopulate. Sitting in my garden as they dart overhead, I am thankful to the swifts for their rapid, whimsical visits and wish for even more.

If the general public understood the role of the swifts in the web of life, perhaps people would be more tolerant of a little noise in their chimneys. But, and this is the rub, are these birds understood by the general public?

For fun and to relieve boredom I quite unscientifically interviewed

some team members and spectators at a neighborhood softball game. Each was asked, "What are those little birds?" The swifts referred to were in noisy abundance and even darted between the pitcher's mound and the batter. I imagine many of those questioned had lived among the swifts for years. My "poll" resulted in the vast majority stating, "I dunno." This was closely followed by, "Just birds," plus a disdainful look communicating, "Don't interrupt my concentration on the game." Only a mom said, "Swift."

Some of my friends tease me about my ardor for this bird. In genuine joy I hush conversations around the living room so guests can listen to the basso whir of wings as the adult bird descends vertically down the chimney to feed the pleasantly noisy young at the nest. Occasionally a bird, sometimes a swift, comes right into a house through the chimney for an unexpected visit. The government and energy companies are constantly advising us to close the damper in our fireplaces when not in use during all seasons of the year to conserve heating and cooling energy. By following this simple admonition we can provide swifts with a roost, yet

exclude uninvited birds from inside our homes.

While recently convalescing from surgery, I enjoyed watching various birds from a picture window, particularly the Chimney Swifts over a neighbor's chimney. What a sad time it was to observe the destruction of this swift family that I had been watching for many days. Someone brought a ladder and was assisted in placing an excluder screen over the chimney, permanently separating the young from the adults. It was done. And there I was, in bed.

Who can mourn the loss of a swift family or other denizens of the wild? I can. Swifts are a native species. They may have recently prospered under modern man, as in certain areas of the country humans have unwittingly aided them by producing a habitat at least as commodious as hollow trees, namely, chimneys. Whether man has helped or hindered the species is not the point, however. The person who perpetrated the action of screening off the chimney has a master's degree and educates young children. Will these students learn respect for life under this teacher's tutelage?

Is the destruction of the swift family symbolic of society's attitude? Where is Aldo Leopold's ecological conscience? Where is simple awareness? Empathy, if you will? Ecological awareness is the first step to take to improve our environment. Environmental education should not be limited to certain teachers and specialized classes, but should be the responsibility of all segments of our society. Next time you are at a sandlot ballgame, a picnic, a swim, or at your home, point out to your companions the wonders of our avian insectivores. You could do no better.

Yes, in rather a ghastly fashion the Chimney Swift's family is gone. This single family in itself is insignificant. But, oh, how significant to all of us is the mental attitude that caused its demise!

Ronald M. Knaus is an Assistant Professor of Nuclear Science at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

The Holiday Ritual

The Holiday Ritual

The Holiday Ritual

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

For many of us there is very little ritual left in our lives. Ceremony — the systematic observance of certain customs — fell victim to the “hurdy-gurdy” of modern times. In the main, this is perhaps a good thing. To behave in a particular manner simply because it is the way one always has, or should, behave is an inadequate foundation for our value system. On the other hand, perhaps we have not merely abandoned the “accepted,” but have begun the more difficult personal search for what is “acceptable” behavior in terms of our individuals lives.

However, holidays are a time when ritual adds a richness to the fabric of our days. Beyond the widely-accepted customs of the Christmas tree or Hanukkah games, special traditions bind up each family unit, marking the members citizens of a close and private world.

In my own family, it would not feel like Christmas unless my Mother misplaced at least one gift purchased many months before an set aside where she could “find” it. Beyond the hilarity of the last-minute hunt through closet tops and the corners of drawers, the ritual of the lost present represents Mother’s continuing effort to please us. In the heat of summer — months before television ads bombard us with goodies — Mother tucks away some item she thinks “looks just like you.” This year-round concern for her family is celebrated in the annual Christmas Eve search party.

As in many families, each of the children in my home has his or her own special Christmas ornament. The red satin drum is my sister’s; the holiday elf belongs to my little brother; I am partial to the small silver bird with its brush tail. Unpacking these Christmas ornaments is a ritual sacred to itself.

The tattered cardboard boxes, their taped edges re-enforced against years of thick-fingered children, are ceremoniously brought down from the attic. Yellowed tissue paper is heaped into indoor snowdrifts. As each beloved ornament is carefully unpacked, its history is recited — the bubble lights bought when my parents were newlyweds; the straw ornament from Hawaii; the grinning pixie bought for my brother’s first Christmas; the train honoring my grandfather, a retired railroad engineer. The history of these sparkling baubles is a recitement of our own family’s past.

Certain rituals belong to the individual. When I come home for the holidays, one of the first things I wait to hear after crossing the threshold is that the nativity scene is waiting for me to set up. This is a private and special task. The sheperds are placed to the left of



illustration by Ricky Perkins

the stables. The wise men approach — year after year in the same order — from the right. The sameness of these patterns is comforting in a world overcome by change.

New traditions emerge every year. After the birth of my brother — the caboose on a family train of girls — my Father began to bring home toy tractors from his farm equipment business. Now, fifteen years later, a ring of small red tractors — not reindeer — bear Santa in his circle round the tree.

We do not read Dickens aloud at my house. Many of our Christmas rituals are hardly the cozy little scenes that one sees pictured in ladies' magazines. But they are customs unique to our family, and treasured for the shared experiences.

For many years we opened Christmas presents just before dawn. Too many Christmas cookies and an excess of

excitement combined to turn my child's stomach upside down. So Santa Claus came after my annual bout of nausea. Throughout the family's photo albums pass a parade of snapshots — the year of the big bike, the Christmas of the much-coveted bride doll — and my face, pasty, a little green around the gills, grins out from each one.

Even now that I am an adult, when the clamour begins over when we should open presents, someone always responds, "Not yet, Becky has to get sick first."

Our family even enjoys a running holiday argument over the merits of a live green tree versus a metallic foil monstrosity. (It's apparent which side I'm on.) True, the silver tree is economical, re-useable, and doesn't shed needles all over the carpet. But it lacks that delicious fragrance that speaks of Christmas and good cheer. And the overlooked pine

needle that pierces a bare summer foot brings back a flood of memories six months out of season.

Amid all the magic that a holiday brings, ritual is the form for fantasy. Time-honored traditions set the significance for our lives. And ceremony is part of the sense of wonder we celebrate.

Hunting The Elusive Deer in the Mississippi Delta

by Johnny Hong

Editor's Note: A special thanks to Mr. Jim Abbott, publisher of The Enterprise-Tocsin, for generously allowing us to reprint the following article.

In any activity, sports or whatever, there are inevitable conflicts about what methods and equipment are the most productive.

Just as some tennis players cling to their wood rackets as for dear life, others abstain from anything except metal or graphite. Some advocate the serve and volley style, while others remain glued to the baseline, battling it out with groundstrokes.

All of which brings me to the point of this story. Delta "nim-rods" have shot everything from a 6 mm Remington to a .45-70 Government issue, utilizing every imagineable technique in the quest for the elusive whitetail deer.

However, it must be remembered that the terrain should determine the "right" weapon and mode of hunting. After all, it seems a little impractical to carry a shotgun with buckshot while waiting for deer to be driven out into the expanse of a 100 acre cut bean field. Equally as impractical is to shoot a rifle with a 10x scope and trudge through a thick set of woods, where visibility is limited, while attempting to drive deer from their bedding areas.

Characteristic of the Delta, many hunters go after their favorite quarry with large caliber rifles, shooting heavy round nose or flat bullets.

The idea behind this practice is that the heavier bullets will not deflect from their trajectory if they strike a twig or branch. In addition, these advocates contend that the lighter, flat shooting bullets will 'blow up' should they strike any such obstacles.

Although it's fine in theory, consider the fact that all bullets will deflect at some angle whenever they collide with any object. Also, if the collision is closer to the hunter than the deer, the buck will not be hit anyway. Even if the bullet is deflected just 15 or 20 feet away, the probability of it hitting the target is totally unpredictable. With this in mind, consider another fact — while the slow moving "brush bucking" cartridges, such as the .45-70 or the .44-40, are devastating on deer at relatively short ranges, the swift spitzers from a .270 Winchester or 7 mm provide unique versatility to a hunter in that they are equally deadly on close shots and at long distances, where the former tends to be somewhat inefficient.

Concerning the subject of rifles, there are thousands of makes and models to fit every need and budget. For the most part, semi-automatics and lever actions, followed by bolt actions, are the most popular with deer hunters. In respect to sheer speed of fire, a major consideration by many local hunters in choosing a rifle — the semi-autos and lever actions are considerably faster than bolt actions.

However, in the hands of an experienced gunner, the bolt action is nearly equal to the others in terms of speed of 'aimed' shots. Also, bolt actions are generally more accurate than semi-autos and lever actions.

Whatever one chooses to hunt, that weapon is sufficient if he sincerely believes in its effectiveness. For, without his confidence, the firearm is ill-suited to the hunter, regardless of ballistics, style, or cost.

In reference to the methods used to harvest deer, there are basically three techniques — still hunting, stand hunting, and driving.

Briefly, still hunting involves the

stalking of deer, hoping you see them before they see you. Unless you're skilled at this, the most challenging test of woodsmanship, or else very lucky, this is not a fruitful way of hunting.

A few things to remember that may help are: first, move slowly to minimize movement and sound that can be detected by a deer's acute senses; second, stop every few steps to look and listen. I wonder how many bucks there are that hunters have walked right past because they weren't paying attention.

An alternative, standing hunting, dictates that the "nimrod" wait in a tree stand or ground blind for bucks, using their trails. A number of factors, such as wind direction, location of feeding and bedding areas, and whether or not the trail is being used frequently enough, determine the placement of the stands.

Derivatives of stand hunting are the rattling and scrape hunting methods. Both are done at a time

when a buck is most vulnerable — mating season. By simulating the sounds of two bucks fighting, rattling stirs the territorial instincts of a buck, which are increased during rutting period.

On the other hand, scrape hunting requires one to hunt on a stand near a buck's territorial calling card, commonly known as a scrape. Usually a fan-shaped area three to five feet across, scrapes characteristically carry a urine odor.

By depositing the urine and a few drops of musk, a buck warns other bucks to stay away from his territory. Most important to hunters, a buck will come back several times a day to check his scrapes.

Finally, driving which is done with people and dogs, is a matter of running all the deer in a given area toward waiting gunners in adjacent locations. This is probably the most productive and popular style of hunting deer in the Delta.

One thing to remember is that big bucks are smart. Many times, they will either refuse to be driven out from their bedding areas or will circle around the driver and escape through the "back door." Therefore, one or two persons should remain at the rear of the drive while a few more follow the initial march.

Thus, several of the infinite keys to deer hunting have been described. Whatever the gun and technique you choose, become efficient with them and there will always be venison in the freezer.

Johnny Hong, a native of Indianola, is currently enrolled as a student in pre-pharmacy and Journalism at Delta State University. Although he is only 18 years old, Johnny has been hunting in the Delta for over five years. He is currently employed part-time at The Enterprise-Tocsin, a weekly newspaper published in Indianola, Miss.



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hours. Daddy had me guide the boat back to the bank. We had heard the shout of boys swimming from the bridge a short distance upstream.

After summoning the divers, we watched them dive for Knocker. Finally, they found him, and pulled him out on the bank. The rubber boots were still overflowing. The boys worked with Knocker. Water was coming from his mouth. Daddy and I stood by, helplessly. After what seemed an age, they turned to Daddy. "There is nothing more we can do, he's dead." My throat hurt. Daddy began to wipe his eyes. Slowly, my tears started to flow, just like the water still trickling from the rubber boots.

The day after, I mourned his passing. Daddy couldn't move, and Mother was sick. What could I do but represent the family at the funeral and burial of Knocker?

The cutting and making of crepe

paper flowers, being a custom of the Delta Black folk at funerals, occupied the next day. In Roberta's little house, her several children and I worked feverishly to create the proper flowers for Knocker's casket and room adornment. My first introduction to death was Knocker, laid out in his fine black suit in Roberta's house, his casket stanced in the center of the room. The paper flowers graced the room in vases, arranged neatly, placed there by Roberta. There were the pink ones, neatly twisted, with green leaves. But the red ones were everywhere, the favorite of all. I look at the cypress tree again.

The walk continues up to the main street. There, on the right, Charley Lou's grocery store used to stand. I examine a small post in the ground. This was the place. There is nothing here now. I see only the post. Charley Lou, the smiling grocer, always beckoned me to his showcases as I came by. His pleasant, small wife helped

him in the store. When the order of groceries was delivered to the Teacher's Home, a token of his friendship was always tucked in — my favorite candy bar. Looming next to the grocery, I remembered a large fenced-in area. This was the private domain of Charley Lou's large bulldog. I half expected to hear the boom of his deep bass bark, threatening anyone who approached. Only one glance at the dog, standing on his haunches with that tenacious stare, made one tread softly.

I remembered a July third at the grocery. The day brought with it an air of anticipation. "Charley Lou wants you," Daddy had said. Alone, I walked pensively the quarter mile. On the way, three large buzzards circled above. They looked like black paper kites, drifting lazily. Charley Lou's showcase held my attention for gumdrops. Mrs. Lou was cutting cheese, and its aroma was almost irresistible. Finally, the walk turned toward home.

We have
fancy frocks
for Christmas
as well as
clothes to play in
the day after.



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Ahead, something looked different. The light of the late afternoon sun struck the front porch. There was a basket that had not been there before. My eyes fixed on the basket and what was in it. Coming nearer, I saw that it moved. It was a pale baby, a baby sister they said. She wore a tiny, pink knit cap with satin flowers on the side. The ribbons were tied under the chin. As I gazed down, my position seemed threatened. "Aw, I don't like that ole thing, take her back!" Inwardly, I wondered if she would grow big enough to play marbles with me. My sister Frances' nickname stuck, and remained — "Ole' Thing." I look at the wooden post.

My cousin comes down the street with a greeting, "The town is coming to see you!" We go to her house to prepare for the reunion. I hear that Charley Lou has long since taken his wife and returned to China.

I feel lost. Everything is changed. Something is missing that I can't recapture.

Then, one by one, faces arrive, older now, but the same. The greetings engulf me with their warmth. Many are missing, but I begin to feel the same again. The esteem of being a part of Pace gradually returns. Then suddenly, I find it. It is as if I had never been away. These time-honored friends bring to me a sense of belonging I could not find before.

I find a spirit within the heart of Pace. The claim staked on my home still endures. The timelessness of memory is preserved in the hearts of others.

Mrs. Marie Amacker Fisk currently resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she taught elementary school for twenty years. At present she is a freelance writer.

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Indianola, Miss.

continued from page 14

started an innovative sales promotion and assumed an important educational role in mechanized farming. Home Hardware's salesmen traveled throughout the Lower Delta demonstrating the effectiveness of the tractor. Several times each year, Home Hardware sponsored tractor-driving schools for its customers. Trucks were sent throughout the area to collect the tenants of the tractor owner, and after gathering these farm laborers on the grounds of the store, salesmen instructed drivers on the proper operation and maintenance procedures. One particular sales approach of Hand increased the spread of tractors. Since the mule was the main competition of the Farmall, Home Hardware devised a credit plan that allowed farmers to trade in their mules as a down payment on a new tractor. As part of the transaction, the farmer had to supply enough oats and hay to feed the mule. Lots were constructed on the premises of the implement store to accommodate the prime antagonist of mechanization.

The disposal of the mules posed a unique problem for the implement company. Healthier mules were sometimes sold to tenants for use in family gardens; older mules faced a more unfortunate fate and were transferred to the dog food processing plant in Greenville. Although Hand's sales techniques placed

extra burdens upon the new enterprise, these imaginative programs accelerated the sale of tractors and substantially assisted the rapport of farmer and implement dealer.

Because of the astute business guidance of Hand, Home Hardware experienced an enormous expansion. In 1926 a tractor dealership was purchased in Greenville. The acquisition of a new store, however, came in the midst of a miserable agricultural depression and one year before the infamous flood that brought nearly all farming in the Lower Delta to a standstill and drove scores of black laborers from the area. Acutely sensitive to the cotton farmer's plight, International Harvester devised a liberal program that allowed farmers to obtain machinery as a replacement for their irretrievable labor. Home Hardware participated in the plan which permitted farmers to buy Farmalls and the accompanying implements with the down payment covering only freight charges. The generous offer was enthusiastically received, and farmers gained the means to continue operations in spite of the diminishing labor supply and shrinking profits. Therefore, during the generally gloomy panic year of 1929, Hand opened new stores in Shaw, Leland, and Hollandale. In July of the same year, the central office was moved from the backwater bog of Rolling Fork to a more centrally located office at Leland, and the name of

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MAINSTREAM MALL, GREENVILLE MS.

the dealership was changed to Delta Implement Company. Later, in the fateful 1930's, because dealers in Yazoo City, Indianola, Cleveland, and Blytheville (Arkansas) faced financial ruin, International Harvester urged Hand's Delta Implement Company to assume control over these tottering businesses. The excellent record of Hand inspired confidence in International Harvester and transformed a small hardware store into what later became the world's largest dealership of farm implements.

During the depression Hand's interests shifted from being the merchant of power farm equipment to becoming the actual user of them. To further demonstrate the usefulness of the tractor, Hand's Delta Implement Company bought abandoned land and began farming operations with reconditioned tractors from the company's stores. Often farmers were bussed from as far as away as Arkansas and the northern Delta counties so that they could personally witness the advantages of the Farmall system. Delta Implement's best advertisement became Hand's adept application of mechanization.

Although tractors overcame many planting and cultivating difficulties, in the post-World War II years a major gap in full mechanization persisted — the hand harvesting of cotton. Since an enormous amount of labor was required to pick the ripened bolls in the late summer and fall, many

planters tenaciously clung to the sharecropping system to assure a stable labor supply. Participation by all members of the tenant family was necessary to gather the crop, and even school openings were delayed for tenant children until they had finished the harvest. The picking season was a particularly serious problem for the farmer who used Farmalls, since their resident labor force consisted of tractor drivers and their families. The tractor farmer's only alternative was to hire costly and unpredictable migrant pickers. International Harvester and Delta Implement were convinced that mechanization had to be complete to be successful.

To present Harvester's first one-row mechanical picker, Hand arranged for extensive experiments, which were conducted at Oscar Bledsoe's Plantation at Shellmound, and Joe Aldridge's Plantation at Leland. Other experimental pickers were shipped directly to Rolling Fork where a host of Harvester technicians and engineers eagerly sought the valuable suggestions of Hand and his Delta Implement associates. Again, through convincing tests and meticulous records, Hand helped to win acceptance for the machine.

Thus, James Hand, Jr., triggered an agricultural revolution which reshaped the Lower Delta's economy completely. He can be given much of the credit for the

continued on page 30

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The Parting

by Malcolm H. Mabry, Jr.

"Well, ole gal, it's time to head home. You've done a good job and we both need a rest." With that, I disengaged the picking units and headed for the trailer.

Strange how a cotton picker takes on a personality of its own — at least in the mind of the man who drives it day after day. But so it does, and I was carrying on this monologue on a cold late November evening. We had finished for the year. The crop was in.

But this was a special evening, one tinged with a bit of sadness. And the tears that welled up in my eyes weren't because of relief but more because I had just picked my last cotton crop. My next year's plans included no cotton for this

farm. Only beans would cover these fields. My cotton years are over.

There has to be a touch of remorse when a phase of one's life comes to an end. Yes, even in spite of all the breakdowns and the mud, the ungodly roar of those fans, the bollworms, and the other thousand problems that beset a cotton farmer.

As I bring the old red picker in for our long anticipated rest, I know that an era has passed. Just as surely as share-cropping and the cotton sack, so shall this be an end for me and for this farm. This rich delta soil that has faithfully turned white every autumn since it was wrestled from the tangled woods and cane brakes; this good earth that has so carefully mothered the cotton seed in her warm bosom every spring; this land must change, too. Now there won't be any more "cotton planting" time.

No more checking the pecan trees to see when the leaves reach the size of squirrel's ear (the one sure sign that it's time to plant cotton). No more waiting until after the "chunk-floater" that the aged Miss Docia always said would come just before planting time. And no more diligently scouting the fields to see if you've got those first blooms by "the Fourth," so that you can discreetly boast at the annual community picnic.

Now I sit here on the picker this late evening and dump the last

basket and gaze out over the now blackened fields which such a short time ago gleamed white in the fall sunlight.

Now my mind begins to wander and my eyes gaze back down time's corridor, and I watch a tow-headed, barefooted, carefree little boy playing in the dusty turnrows between the cotton fields.

I remember those hot afternoons when my black "mammy" and her little boy Sam and I picked in this same field that I have today picked alone. And I remember those early, very early, days when I rode to the gin with Jessie driving and ole Maude and Lula pulling the wagon.

And how many times I've dug tunnels under the cotton as we waited on the gin yard to get ginned off. And when the terrible 40's brought war so close to home we kids fought the Japs and the Nazis from our "foxholes" in those cotton trailers. What memories!

And then when I reached 4-H club age, I can see my daddy giving me two acres for my project. I hoed and tried to pick it and reached the pinnacle when I was awarded a check for all of \$27.50 in an assembly at school one day for having the top 4-H Club cotton project in the county.

And then as my mind flies along I see a sad, hot June afternoon at Oakridge Cemetery in 1967 when we laid my daddy to rest forever. That was a Friday. Monday



morning this teacher-legislator became a farmer. Uncertain and scared, he faced the challenge. But by summer's end, he is plowing the fields and trying out the cotton picker — out in the pasture, of course — just getting the feel of it. Soon, like a young cadet, he thinks he is ready to solo, and when the fields are ready, so is he. He is now a cotton farmer.

From then until now, ten years, I've been on my own. Cotton has been my joy and my sorrow, my glory and my damnation. My life has been wrapped around cotton just as tight as those steel belts wrap around a bale. It has, in truth, been my life.

And here I am sitting at the end of the field, watching an autumn sunset bring an end to a day and to an era — for me.

Faithful old Johnny has finished walking this last trailer. (How many hundred has he walked these 44 years that he has been on this place?) And he probably wonders why I'm sitting here gazing out across these fields that I've seen a thousand times.

He can never know, for only the soul knows the sadness and heartbreak that comes when you bid an old friend goodbye for the last time.

But it's almost dark now and it's getting cold. Time to go home. Tomorrow I'll feel better.

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gradual shift from the outdated man and mule system to the more up-to-date mechanized farming practices currently used in the Delta. As a result, farmers today have enjoyed a prosperity which was rare under the sharecrop method. Yet, the new abundance has created new responsibilities. Previous mule drivers and hoe-hands have become skilled machine operators and land-owners have been forced to acquaint themselves with a wide range of topics in the new agriculture including farm mechanics, chemistry, and economics. Indeed, Hand's machines have been a major factor in making the Delta one of the most progressive farming centers anywhere.

Hand's impact on the Delta, however, has not been limited strictly to agricultural mechanization. He was among the handful of

the Delta's civic leaders who founded Delta Council, and his presidency of the early Council greatly strengthened the fledgling organization. Hand later chaired important committees within Delta Council which materially assisted in flood control projects, forest management, and promotions of agricultural research programs at Stoneville. He played a pivotal role in the formation of the National Cotton Council which was created as a nationwide effort to market cotton. His many years service on the Board of the Mississippi Levee Commissioners earned him the highest civilian award offered by the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Hand's highly developed leadership talents have been in great demand by varied interests. President Eisenhower requested his membership on the National Agricultural Advisory Commission. He has served as a director of both the Mississippi

Power and Light Company and the Staple Cotton Association, and is a past President of the Mississippi Economic Council.


But ranking above all of these lofty achievements is the fact that Jim Hand is a man of impeccable character and genuine humility. Not only do his friends attest to his generosity and kindness, his business competitors have nothing but praise for him as well. In every way he epitomizes the Delta gentleman.

Charles Pearce is a graduate of Delta State University, where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees in history. Currently he is a member of the faculty of Indianola Academy.

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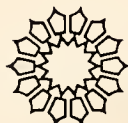
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